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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Tuesday, December 1, 1931.

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "Caring for the Table Linen." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

Bulletin available: "Stain Removal from Fabrics."

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This morning, right in the midst of the breakfast dishes, the phone rang.

"Hello, Aunt Sammy," said Marian Lee's voice. "How would you likt to do a little charity work today?"

"Charity work?" said I.

"Yes, please. My best tablecloth is in dire need of first aid this morning. It suffered from several accidents during the Thanksgiving dinner. Some red candle-wax was spilled on it, for one thing. And it acquired a large spot of turkey gravy, for another. To add to these two, I find a brownish stain that looks like coffee. Here it is laundry day in my home, and I don't dare go ahead and wash the cloth until I have remedied those spots. Didn't you tell me once, Aunt Sammy, that stains may sometimes be set permanently if they are not removed before going in the wash tub?"

My, I was pleased by that last remark. Yes, pleased and flattered to think that somebody actually remembered my advice and was practicing it.

So, of course, I told Marian Lee that she was quite right--that hot, soapy laundry water certainly was likely to set some stains and make them stubborn and difficult to budge.

"For safety sake, take the stain out first," I began, just as if I was giving a radio chat. "And the best and most successful time to remove any stain is--"

"Please stop," exclaimed Marion Lee. "Please don't finish that sentence or you'll be making me feel negligent, dilatory, slack and careless all at once. I know exactly what you are going to say. The right time to remove a stain is at once. I know perfectly well that the right time to get after the spots on my tablecloth was last Thursday, right after they happened. But I didn't. So now what am I going to do?"

"I'd suggest," I said, "that you take down the stain removal bulletin from your kitchen shelf and read what it has to say about coffee, gravy or candle-wax stains. When I finish these dishes and write my radio chat, I'll

come over and we'll work on that tablecloth together."

"That's exactly what I wanted. I'll be looking for you. Good-bye," said Marian Lee.

I returned to my dishes. And, as I washed, I thought over this problem of caring for linens. Both the life and beauty of table linen depend on care. First, there's the matter of laundering. Then there's the matter of stains.

Proper washing and ironing are important, because the natural luster of linen and the heavy stain texture of damask are harmed by strong alkali soaps and by all alkaline bleaches. These are not only hard on the fabric, but are unnecessary. Linen is really easier to wash than cotton, because it does not tend to hold in the dirt, as cotton does.

For laundering, use a mild, pure soap and wash in a heavy suds, squeezing the soap through the linen rather than rubbing on a board. Rubbing is injurious because it roughens the fine fiber. Another item about laundering--avoid too much bluing. Still another--use no starch. And a third--rinse thoroughly. Sunshine is the safest bleach.

The final finished beauty of the damask, of course, lies in the ironing. Iron your tablecloth while still quite damp and continue the process until it is completely dry, pressing on the wrong side first and then on the right side, working from selvage to selvage. Linen can stand a hotter iron than silk or wool, but too much heat causes damage.

If your linen has monograms or embroidery, you can make them stand out by ironing on the wrong side and pressing over a Turkish bath towel or heavy flannel.

Many people make the mistake of not ironing their damask long enough to thoroughly dry it. Ironing damask is an art which requires time, patience and pride in the finished result. Avoid needless folds. The smaller pieces may be rolled instead of folded. And change the position of the creases now and then, since linen gets the most wear on these creases. And, by the way, linen which is to be stored or laid away for a long time is best left unironed. It will not turn yellow if it is wrapped in a fast-color blue paper.

So much for washing, ironing and so on. Now for those inevitable stains. Even with the greatest care accidents will happen. And it's a wise housekeeper who is ready to go after that stain and take it out as soon as it occurs. Don't imagine from this that I am in favor of breaking up the family meal and pulling off the tablecloth the minute after Sonny spills some cream or oatmeal. Not quite so bad as that. But right <u>after</u> the meal, I do approve of going after that spot first thing, to save trouble later. Fresh stains frequently come entirely out, if you apply a little cold water. But just let them stand for some time or get into the laundry and the job of removing them will be twice as difficult.

What to do about a coffee stain on a tablecloth?

I'll tell you what I'd do. I'd open my bulletin to page 12 and follow directions. Here is what the bulletin says about coffee stains in general:

"The brown stains from coffee are due, at least in part, to certain compounds formed in the roasting process, which are soluble in water. Alkalis, such as soap, Javelle water, washing soda, ammonia and the caustic alkalis, change the color of coffee stains to a bright yellow. The stains are not more difficult to remove after this change, although the treatment with alkali may cause the stain to look more distinct than before. Fresh coffee stains usually are not difficult to remove, but the last trace of old stains sometimes proves resistant. Cream in the coffee often necessitates the use of grease solvents in addition to the other reagents."

On any washable material like linen, removing a coffee stain should be a simple matter. Fresh stains and most old ones will come out with laundering in just plain soap and water. In the case of very heavy or old stains, a slight trace sometimes remains. But drying the cloth in the sun will usually bleach out these traces. Or you can use a mild bleaching agent. Be sure, of course, that the linen is thoroughly rinsed.

The second method is using boiling water. This works best with stains not more than a few hours old. Stretch the linen over a bowl and pour boiling water on the stain from a height of 2 or 3 feet.

Gravy stains? Sponge the stain with cold water. And then use some grease solvent to remove any traces of grease. Many gravy stains will come out in the wash.

But candle-wax. That takes a little care to remove. In fact, there are usually two processes involved in getting it out. Candle-wax usually consists of paraffin colored with pigment or dye. First, you remove the paraffin and then you take out any dye that may be left on the cloth.

Stains from paraffin do not spread like ordinary grease spots, but harden on the cloth, so that much of the stain may usually be scraped away with a dull knife. The part of the wax that has penetrated the fiber, however, must be removed either by blotting paper or a grease solvent. Put pieces of clean white blotting paper over and under the spot. Then press with a hot iron. If a trace of the stain still remains, sponge it with a grease solvent like carbon tetrachloride or gasoline.

After the wax is all out, sometimes there is still a trace of the color remaining. A little wood alcohol will usually take this out.

I've often talked about this useful stain removal bulletin before. But for any new listeners, let me say again that if you want scientific information on how to take spots and stains from clothes, linens and so on, here it is in a nice little booklet called "Stain Removal from Fabrics", Farmers' Bulletin No. 1474. If you drop me a postcard and say that you want bulletin Fourteen Seventy-Four, I'll see that the busy people in the mailing room send a copy off to you just the first minute they can. You can send your request to this station or direct to the Dept. of Agriculture at Washington, D. C.

Tomorrow:"Furnishing the Child's Room"